

## New Era

But where to Begin?

This Autumn, all those involved in supporting young people (11-18 year olds) in church have faced significant challenges when planning how to safely reconnect with young people and encourage them in their faith.

The continuing pandemic and necessary social distancing restrictions make many of our usual models and methods redundant but young people are looking for opportunities to come together to explore faith, to discover their purpose and value, and to be part of church community.

Being part of a loving church community is a necessary component of faith development for young people and critical for their discovering abundant life in Jesus, but many have been missing from our congregations this term. So how do we meet the challenge?

It's clear to all of us that we can't simply wait and hope that things will eventually go 'back to normal'. Even if you already have an ongoing of youth ministry activity, let's take some time now to pray, listen and plan for a new era.

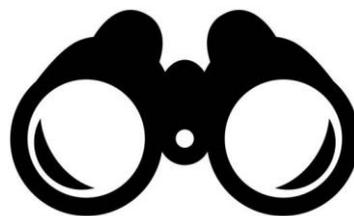
It can feel overwhelming to think about starting from scratch, so here are some exercises to get you started. Print these sheets and scribble down thoughts as they come to you, share those thoughts with other leaders and pray at every step.

What's included:

- 2) What do you want to see? Vision mind map
- 3) Team First –
- 4) Discipleship
- 5) Locked doors and keys – challenges and what you have to face them
- 6) Year Planner - headlines for each term.
- 7) Faith Forming environments
- 8) Rooted in Faith
- 9) Building closer connections
- 10) My rhythms – what will sustain you?



What do you want to see? Mind-map your hopes for 'Generation Covid'<sup>1</sup>, the young people growing up in a fearful and anxious time. Pray as you consider and write your thoughts of how Christ will bring transformation. Fill the sheet with as much as comes into your mind, then circle thoughts that stand out.



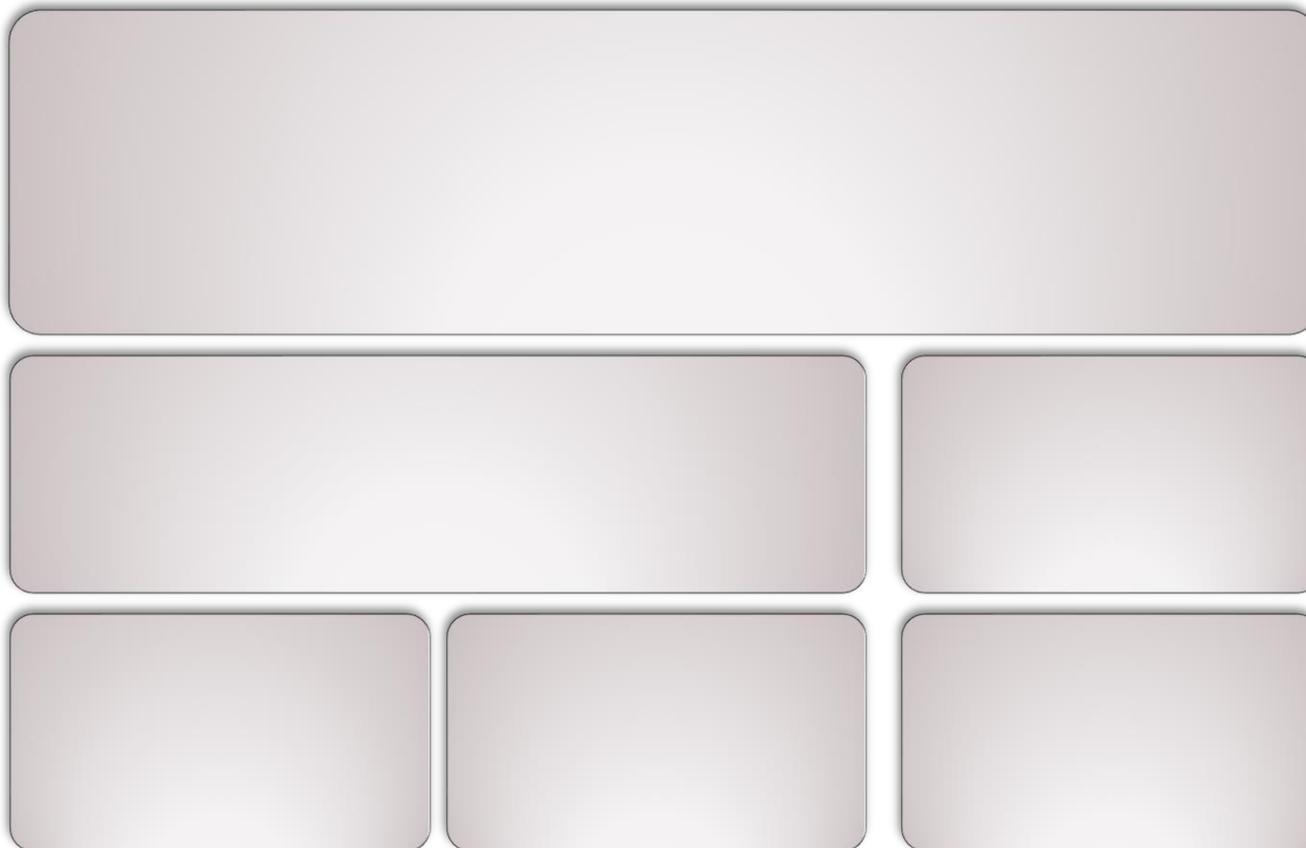
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54662485>

You can't do this alone. Who will partner with you to build this vital ministry?

Write onto the bricks the people and elements that will build and sustain your team.

Who can you partner with for the sake of young people?


 A grid of seven light grey rounded rectangular boxes for writing notes. The top row contains one large box. The second row contains two boxes of equal width. The third row contains three boxes of equal width.

Here are some headings to consider:

Which are important for your team of leaders and helpers and how will they feature in your plan?

- Clear expectations
- Regular commitment
- Friendship
- Shared Vision
- Opportunities for input and equipping
- A space for celebration
- Rest
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*“In digital Babylon, faithful resilient disciples are handcrafted one at a time.”<sup>2</sup>*

Don't start by thinking about pulling in a crowd.

Without forgetting those on the margins, reflect on the depth of discipleship you offer to the 'core' young people in your congregation.

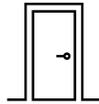
Jesus had 3 close friends He invested in. Which 3 young people could your church support more deeply?

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<sup>2</sup> Faith For Exiles, Kinnaman and Matlock, 2019

Explore the challenges you face and consider how you may meet these with your strengths.

- 1) What are the main challenges or obstacles? (list them around the locked door)
- 2) What are your key strengths? What about your church, team and ministry? (list them around the key)
- 3) How might they connect?



Headline planning by term.

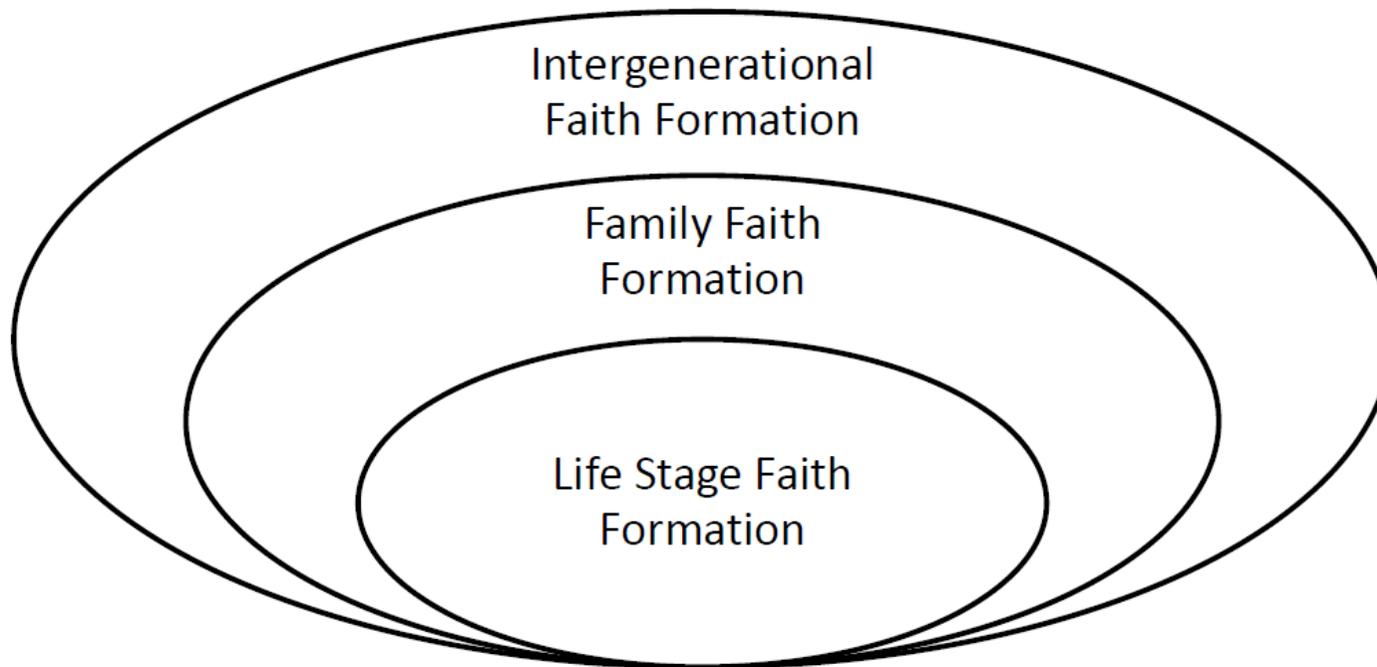
What will be your key youth events in the academic year, for the first and second half of each term?

Autumn

Spring

Summer

Vibrant Faith describe three faith forming environments. What activities and resources can we plan to support young people into each of these three environments?



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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Vibrant Faith's 'A guide to Transforming Faith for a New World, John Roberto <https://vibrantfaith.org/>

Research has found key factors that help young people stay rooted in church<sup>4</sup>. Give yourself a rating for each of these areas. How could you encourage these in new ways?

### Inclusion

- "There has to be some way of getting us to be part of a whole family"
- Importance of intergenerational relationships

### Equality

- "I was treated maturely really early. I was valued as a person"
- Faith flourishes in action
- Young people want to be involved in leadership and decision-making to help make a difference

### Space

- Adolescence brings upheaval and questions
- Safe space to explore, welcomed and accepted

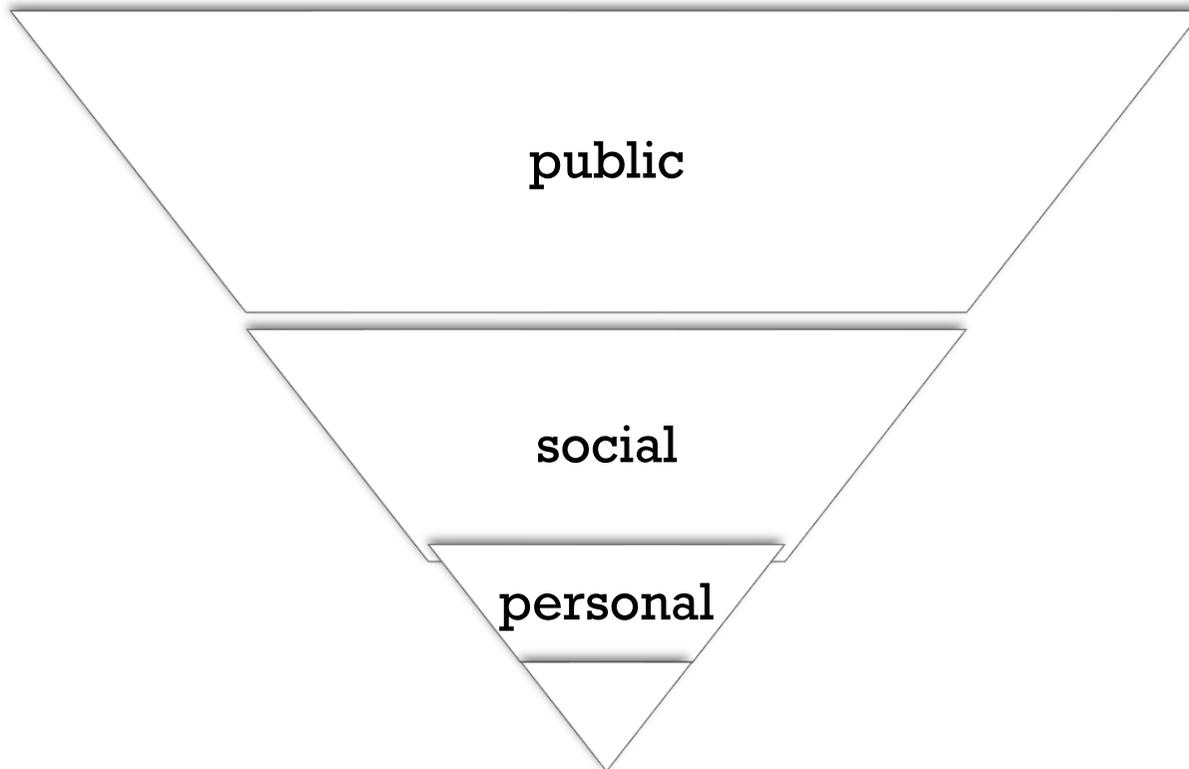
### Leadership

- Young people seek genuine, meaningful experiences and relationships
- Youth leaders who act as 'bridge people' to wider church
- Youth leaders need support and whole church vision and strategy.

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<sup>4</sup> Rooted in the Church. Church of England Education Office. 2016 [https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2016\\_rooted\\_in\\_the\\_church\\_summary\\_report.pdf](https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2017-10/2016_rooted_in_the_church_summary_report.pdf)

Use this proxemics diagram as a way to think about the strength of your connections to young people. How might you increase your public connections and reach-out to more young people in your community? How might your church plan to get to know young people who get 'closer'? Could young people find a home at the heart of the congregation, forming safe, deeper relationships with a voice and meaningful input?



### Rhythms

Mission to young people wonderful but tough at times. What rhythms and routines will sustain you for the medium and long term?

How will young people remain a priority when so much else seeks our attention. List examples for each of these headings, then think about how to add them into your diary.

Rest?

Learning?

Fun?

What energises me?

How will I hear God?

Where will I get support?

